

## Sabbath School Lesson #9 – Ministry in the New Testament Church – 24-30 Aug 2019

**C**hrist desires to live His life in us so that we may practice pure undefiled faith. “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep himself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27).

Sunday: A New Kind of Community – Like the early church Christians, we need sober living today. We need to heed the counsel given to Titus. The Epistle of Paul to Titus was written for the special purpose of directing him how to “set in order the things that are wanting,” and is therefore full of instruction and exhortation. Titus had been left in Crete, a country whose inhabitants were proverbial even among people of loose character for their wickedness and baseness; consequently there was need that those who had professed Christ should be specially on their guard. The epistle is most strikingly applicable to us who profess to be Seventh-day Adventists in the present day, when the state of things all over the world seem worse than that of Crete in the days of Paul and Titus. Referring to some who were even making a profession of Christianity, and were setting themselves up as teachers, Paul wrote: “They profess that they know God; but by their works they deny Him, being abominable, and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate” (Titus 1:16). This corresponds exactly to what the same apostle wrote to Timothy concerning “the last days,” when men should be “lovers of their own selves,” “having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof” (2 Timothy 3:1-5). Then “they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Timothy 4:3-4). This being the state of things, it is most fitting that the exhortation should come to us personally: “Speak thou the things that become sound doctrine.” This instruction covers the duties of all classes – aged men, aged woman, young women, young men, and servants. It is plain, and no one can fail to understand it. It is not servants only, but all, who should so live “not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.”

Monday: Dorcas’s Ministry and Witness – For many years we have had, in our Seventh-day Adventist Church, a ‘Dorcas Ministry’, but very few know how to do ‘Dorcas ministry.’ Of Tabitha, also known as Dorcas, whom Jesus working through Peter resurrected, it is said: “This woman [Dorcas] was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did” (Acts 9:36). That was why she did so many good works – she was full of them. Many people try to become good by doing good works; but that is impossible; for a man cannot do good works unless he has them in him; and if he has the good works in him, he will be good. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good (Luke 6:45). If one is full of good works and almsdeeds, it will not be difficult for them to appear. But how can we be full of good works and almsdeeds? The way is plain: “Being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God” (Philippian 1:11).

Tuesday: Giving as a Way of Sharing – “I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). Mark the words quoted: “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” These are the words of the Lord Jesus, who speaks with authority in this matter, for He “gave Himself for us,” and giving Himself, He gave all things. “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9).

That there is profit in giving is seen from the words of the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:3: “If I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing.” There is no blessing to be received if one gives without love; but if love prompts the gift, there is profit to the giver. Love therefore is the soil out of which all good grows. It was Christ’s love that led Him to give Himself for us. Love is the priceless gift; money cannot be compared with it, and all the wealth of the world cannot buy it. Therefore he who gives love, gives everything, the bestowal of his goods must necessarily accompany the gift. And even though he has no goods to bestow, in giving love he bestows infinitely more than the one who gives millions of money without love. If giving as a way of sharing, we need Christ’s love. The blessing, therefore, of giving is the rich blessing of love.

The eighth chapter of 2 Corinthians really covers the whole matter of giving as a way of sharing. In the second of Corinthians, Paul presents the case of the churches in Macedonia, "in a great trial of affliction," yet "the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality." This does not say how much they gave; they may have given an amount much less than that given by some others; for God does not count as men count. You remember that the poor widow who gave a farthing gave more than all the rich men who cast of their superfluity into the treasury; for her whole heart went with it. Notice that the Macedonians first "gave their own selves to the Lord." When this is really done, the problem of giving is solved; for if one gives himself, all that he has or may acquire is of course the Lord's. We must guard against deluding ourselves with the thought that giving ourselves is a substitute for giving means to God; there can be no real giving of self that does not also include everything we have; and when that is done, we shall be watchful to see every opportunity that is provided, and we may be sure that there will be some.

Wednesday: Paul's Guide to Living and Loving Well – The apostle counsels on living in holiness. On this subject, Paul wrote: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). There is such a thing as living to the glory of God even in eating and drinking. The same inspired writer says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1). We are to serve God, therefore, with our bodies. Again, the apostle writes, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). How are we to glorify and serve God in our bodies? Evidently, not by subjecting them to misuse, but by preserving each faculty in the best condition for use in His service. This is how we can eat and drink to the glory of God. The preservation of the faculties of the body is intimately connected with eating and drinking; and therefore we are bound to eat and drink such things and to do this in such a manner, as will tend to keep our physical faculties strong and unimpaired. For, as the text declares, even our bodies are not our own, but belong to God, and are to be used not to gratify ourselves, but to serve Him. We are therefore accountable to Him for the manner in which we treat our bodies, just as men are accountable for the use they make of the property of another.

The spiritual faculties are, to a large extent, dependent upon the physical. The two are not separate and distinct, but closely joined together. And no one can fully exercise his spiritual faculties while his mind is beclouded and his physical faculties benumbed from any cause, as for example from improper eating and drinking. The fate of Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron is set before us as a terrible warning of the danger that lurks in this act, and an object lesson upon the relation between the physical nature and the spiritual perceptions.

"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess 5:23). Holiness is wholeness. That which is perfect is holy. But man is imperfect. He was perfect at its creation, but he sinned and lost his uprightness. Bringing man again to a state of holiness, is bringing him back to the condition that was his before the fall. And this is done not by any visible outward change, but by the gift of Christ – the substitution of His perfection for all that is imperfect in man. Christ gives Himself to us, so His perfection is our perfection, whether of body or soul or spirit. May we the Lord preserve us blameless in all things.

Thursday: James "the Just" – People who have had great advantages are very prone to look with contempt upon those who have been less favoured, and to feel pride because of their own superior knowledge, forgetting that their superior knowledge only makes their own shortcomings the more marked. A man who knows much and does wrong is obviously more blameworthy than the one who knows only little. James wrote: "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any man be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass; for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed" (James 1:22-25).